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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 002625

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER  
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY  
PARIS FOR C. NEARY  
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER, DCHA/OFDA/ARO FOR RILEY, MYER AND  
CHIKODZORE  
USAID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA FOR HAJJAR, HALMREST-SANCHEZ,  
KHANDAGLE AND MARX  
DCHA/FFP FOR LANDIS, BRAUSE, SKORIC AND PETERSEN  
AFR/SA FOR POE AND COPSON  
AFR/SD FOR ISALROW AND WHELAN  
REDSO/ESA/FFP FOR SENYKOFF  
GENEVA PLEASE PASS TO UNOCHA, IFRC  
PRETORIA FOR USAID/DCHA/FFP FOR DISKIN  
DCHA/OFDA FOR BRYAN AND MUELLER, AND FAS FOR HELM  
ROME PLEASE PASS TO FODAG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [E Aid](#) [ECON](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: IDPS--FEAR AND LOATHING IN ZIMBABWE

REF: A. HARARE 2529

- [B](#). HARARE 2403
- [C](#). HARARE 2318
- [D](#). HARARE 2310

Summary:

1. On November 13 - 15 together with UN Senior Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Andrew Timpson, Poloff visited ex-commercial farm workers and their families in Tete province, Mozambique, northern Mashonaland Central province in Zimbabwe, and on a commercial farm near Harare. The lack of food security in all three locations merits food assistance. Although the reception for ex-workers in Mozambique seemed to be friendly, those remaining in Zimbabwe live in fear and are trying to stay out of sight, complicating the relief response effort. End Summary

Displaced in Mozambique

2. Poloff interviewed about fifteen ex-commercial farm workers in the Mozambican towns Chikafa and Goho who reported that they knew of about sixty ex-farm worker families (about 300 people) who had moved into those areas since September 2002, and that more were arriving daily. Justice for Agriculture (JAG), a Zimbabwe-based commercial agriculture advocacy organization, estimates that about 900 ex-commercial farm worker families, or about 4,500 people, have already moved into Tete province.

3. All of the ex-commercial farm workers interviewed in Tete were born in other parts of Mozambique (none were from the Chikafa / Goho area), but had moved to live and work on commercial farms in Zimbabwe from between 1958 and 1986. All had Zimbabwean identity cards, had voted in recent elections in Zimbabwe, and most said they had Zimbabwean-born wives and children (now with them in Mozambique). All said war veterans forced them out of their residences on commercial farms, mostly in Guruve district, Mashonaland Central province, and told them to "go back where they came from". They said they heard rumors that village heads in Mozambique were granting land, so they hired private trucks to ferry them into the area.

4. All the ex-workers had been granted twelve acres which they had cleared, erected traditional round mud-brick African huts with grass thatch roofs, and planted cotton, maize and tobacco. (Note: Poor soil quality, and insufficient rainfall result in low agricultural productivity in the area off the Zimbabwean escarpment on both sides of the border. End Note.) Many had done day labor for their new neighbors, and community work for a food-for-work program with WFP-Mozambique, but, the expected WFP food delivery was already three weeks behind schedule. In Chikafa, there was no electricity, no phone anywhere in the area, no running water, no paved roads, and no school. The nearest health clinic and school were on the Zimbabwean side. The nearest school in Mozambique was about twenty kilometers north. They said they used their severance packages, anywhere between ZWD\$150,000 and ZWD\$340,000 (about US\$88 - 200), to finance their transport, seeds and food, but all said those funds were essentially exhausted. Their clothing was in average condition, and most of our interlocutors appeared thinner than average, but not wasting. They reported that they bought basic foodstuffs and supplies on the Zimbabwean side with severance money, but these were sometimes confiscated by Zimbabwean police on the walk back to Mozambique. (Note: When asked, the Zimbabwean police justified these confiscations as an attempt to combat smuggling, and insisted

that only very small, personal amounts of foodstuffs could be exported. End Note.)

15. Although our interlocutors said they were hungry, and that there was hunger in this area, they said the people in Mozambique were friendly. Some said they could send their children to school on the Zimbabwean side (which has instruction in Shona and English), if they had the school fees. Others said they would try to send theirs to the Mozambican school (where instruction is in Shona and Portuguese). The interviews were conducted in Shona; no ex-commercial farm workers spoke fluent English or Portuguese. They seemed comfortable with their circumstances, and expressed disinterest in moving elsewhere. They described their exodus and current hunger with a tinge of sadness, and seemed bitter at being forced out of Zimbabwe. Due to that experience, and political tension, they said they would never move back to Zimbabwe even if jobs became available.

#### Displaced in Zimbabwe

16. Although WFP reports that as many as 1000 ex-commercial farm worker families are already displaced in Mashonaland Central province (Ref C), near the border with Mozambique, and interviews were scheduled with dozens, Poloff was only able to interview two. The others reportedly feared reprisals by war veterans for talking to international officials, and stayed away. The two interviewed had been forced off a commercial farm near Guruve having received no severance packages, traveled by public bus to Chikafa (on the Zimbabwean side) and been allotted twelve acres under similar circumstances described above.

17. They were born in Zimbabwe of Zimbabwean parents and had first tried to move back to their ancestral communal area in September, but were rejected by the community who said that as ex-commercial farm workers, and suspected MDC supporters, they could not accept them. Although the village head in Chikafa had allotted them land, they could not buy maize or seed from the local Grain Marketing Board (GMB) depot, and reported a generally unfriendly and threatening reception by fellow Zimbabweans. They said they had been eating forest fruit primarily these days. Their compounds were mud-brick and thatch dwellings, and they seemed to be in the same physical condition as ex-workers in Mozambique--thinner than average, but not wasting.

#### Eating Termites and Forest Fruit

18. On November 15, Poloff interviewed about fifteen ex-commercial farm workers on the Thanner farm in Melfort (about 25 kilometers southeast of Harare) who were eating dried termites and unripe forest fruit to survive. (Note: Although dried caterpillars can be found in street markets in Zimbabwe and are occasionally eaten in a fried sauce over maize meal, these are not considered a staple. End Note.) The ex-workers laid out mats on the ground and were drying what appeared to be a few kilos of termites in the sun, some with wings still on, others de-winged and ready for consumption. During the interview, children were gnawing on small green forest fruit; the workers reported that these were the only food they had been eating in recent days. They reported that they were not prevented from buying maize at a nearby GMB depot for political reasons, but rather, could not because they simply didn't have the money.

19. There had originally been about 120 farm worker families at the Thanner farm; twenty had already left. Those remaining were living in their original dwellings, simple mud-brick and tin roof huts with no electricity. Some were working two days a week for ZWD\$290 per day (about US\$0.17) for the new settlers who had divided the farm into sixteen individual plots. The ex-workers had only small vegetable garden-sized plots around their houses, far too small to support the annual food needs of a whole family, and no maize seed. Six of the settlers, mostly civil servants living and working in Harare, had started to farm their 50 - 160 acre plots, but ten had never visited the location. The ex-workers appeared to be in similar physical condition as their compatriots elsewhere--thin, but not wasting. They complained of hunger and asked Poloff and his companions for food assistance. Five to seven war veterans arrived from a nearby farm, and violently halted the interview beating the other members of Poloff's party, one severely (Ref A).

#### Comment:

10. This is the first in a series of reports to characterize the situation for IDPs. Due to time constraints, Poloff was unable to confirm the total numbers of ex-commercial farm workers recently resettled in the Tete province of Mozambique. Based on the density of villages just across the border it could easily number into the hundreds of families, possibly even the JAG reported figure of 900 (4,500 people). Due to effective intimidation, Poloff was unable to confirm

the plethora of independent reports suggesting that thousands of families have already moved to other locations within Zimbabwe. (Note: We have no reason to doubt this estimate and the likelihood that it is increasing. End Note.) No one whom Poloff interviewed had been transported by GOZ vehicle, or involuntarily, though all said they had been "forced" off the commercial farms.

11. Although the environment in Mozambique was friendly, it did not seem to be easy. There was little infrastructure, and people seemed tired of all the work involved in moving, building a house, and planting on meager nutrition. They moved and spoke lethargically. They were not dying on their feet, but without some food assistance in the coming months, their plights will become dire.

12. The situation for ex-workers in Dande (northern Zimbabwe) was worse. They had huts, compounds, and farmland, but could not buy maize or seed from the GMB, and in the politically threatening environment could not rely on anyone to help. With meager resources at present, their need for food assistance seems more acute, and without seed this year, more prolonged.

13. The situation for ex-workers in Melfort was also very bad. Their biggest problem seemed to be that they didn't have enough land on which to grow their own food. Working for US\$0.34 a week was simply not enough to cover their family food needs. They need food assistance, but, as Poloff and his party experienced, war veterans controlled the farm completely. It would seem difficult to design a feeding program which did not account for the war veterans' control.

14. The fear demonstrated by ex-workers who failed to appear for interviews with us, and the desperation and tension experienced on the Thanner farm suggest that the situation is bad for any ex-commercial farm worker in Zimbabwe. This fear complicates response planning, as it appears ex-workers would rather remain unseen than identify themselves for international assistance, and the unwanted attentions of neighboring ZANU-PF zealots. End Comment.  
SULLIVAN